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1 — EPA 'absolutely, deeply sorry' for mine spill, Albuquerque Journal, 8/12/2015

<http://www.abqjournal.com/627002/news/epa-apologizes-takes-responsibility-for-mine-spill.html>

The top U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official apologized Tuesday on behalf of her department for spilling 3 million gallons of mining sludge that fouled the Animas and San Juan rivers, saying the spill "pains me to no end." Gina McCarthy made the comments after federal and contract workers accidentally unleashed the spill Aug. 5 while inspecting the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colo.

2 — EPA officials promise analysis of river contamination today, Daily Times, 8/11/2015

http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28625135/epa-officials-promise-analysis-river-contamination-wednesday

EPA officials offered little new information Tuesday afternoon on pollution levels in the Animas River after agency workers accidentally released an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater contaminated with heavy metals into the river a week ago.

3 EPA Chief Apologizes For Huge Colorado Mine Spill, HuffPost, 8/11/2015

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/epa-colorado-mine_55ca70c9e4b0f73b20bb08a3

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency was remorseful Tuesday after an EPA safety team accidentally caused 3 million gallons of wastewater to spill from an abandoned mine in Colorado, turning a major waterway a bilious yellow hue. "This is a tragic and unfortunate incident, and EPA is taking responsibility to ensure that it is cleaned up," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy.

4 — EPA Chief Gina McCarthy 'Deeply Sorry' for Colorado Mine Spill, ABC News, 8/11/2015

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/epa-chief-gina-mccarthy-deeply-colorado-mine-spill/story?id=33022515>

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Gina McCarthy, responded today to criticism that her agency moved too slowly in alerting the public about the 3 million gallons of mine waste that has contaminated a Colorado river, saying the lag time is mainly due to the cautious nature of the government's efforts. McCarthy said she is "deeply sorry" and it "pains me to no end" to see the orange-colored toxic stream unleashed in the West. Calling the spill a "tragic and unfortunate accident," she took full responsibility for the waste oozing from an abandoned mine into the Animas River.

5 — EPA's McCarthy: Contaminated water from Colorado mine will spread, Fox News, 8/11/2015

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/08/11/epa-mccarthy-contamination-from-colorado-mine-spill-will-spread-cause-still/>

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy warned Tuesday that millions of gallons of contaminated water from a Colorado mine now surging along Colorado's Animas River could eventually impact Mexico, Utah and the Navajo nation.

6 — Local anger swells at EPA over toxic gold mine spill in Animas River, Guardian, 8/11/2015

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/11/animas-river-spill-epa-anger>

Townpeople watching millions of gallons of orange-colored mine waste flow through their communities demanded clarity on Tuesday about possible long-term threats to their water supply. Colorado and New Mexico made disaster declarations for stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers and the Navajo Nation declared an emergency as the toxic waste spread downstream toward Lake Powell in Utah.

7 – EPA head to visit Durango to observe river cleanup, 9News, 8/11/2015

<http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2015/08/11/mine-waste-leak-hickenlooper/31461929/>

The administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency will visit Durango Wednesday to observe the response efforts of crews working to cleanup last week's mine waste spill that turned the Animas River green, sparking an emergency declaration in two states. The EPA's Gina McCarthy will also visit Farmington, New Mexico, where she will meet with local officials and community members.

8 EPA Chief Apologizes as Anger Mounts, Wall Street Journal, 8/11/2015

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-chief-apologizes-for-toxic-spill-affecting-rivers-in-colorado-new-mexico-1439321379>

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy apologized Tuesday for a mine spill in Colorado that her agency caused last week and planned to travel to the area Wednesday, amid increasing criticism from lawmakers about the EPA's response.

9 — EPA chief: Colorado mine spill 'pains me', Albq Journal, 8/11/2015

<http://www.abqjournal.com/626763/news/epa-chief-colorado-mine-spill-pains-me.html>

The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Tuesday her department takes full responsibility for spilling 3 million gallons of mining waste that turned a southwest Colorado river an unnatural shade of orange, adding it "pains me to no end." Gina McCarthy made the comments as her agency comes under increased scrutiny after federal and contract workers accidentally unleashed the spill last week while inspecting the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado.

10 — Silverton residents reconsider need for Superfund in light of spill, Daily Times, 8/11/2015

http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28625241/silverton-residents-reconsider-need-superfund-light-spill

Silverton Standard editor Mark Esper said he had just finished lunch on Aug. 5 when he heard an unusual call over the police scanner. "I hear Sheriff (Bruce) Conrad say on the scanner — '20-foot wall of orange sludge coming toward Silverton,'" Esper said.

11 — Gold mine's toxic plume extends to Utah, USA Today, 8/11/2015

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/10/navajo-nation-epa-mine-wastewater-spill/31399517/>

The plume of heavy metals released last week into the Animas River from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo., reached Utah on Monday. As of Monday evening, officials said the plume of contamination was southeast of Montezuma Creek, Utah, and was headed for Lake Powell. Environmental Protection Agency officials say the pollutants in the plume include arsenic, lead, copper, aluminum and cadmium, but have not released any detailed information on the spill that started Wednesday morning and has since been contained.

12 — Colorado health official: No river health risk, CNN, 8/11/2015

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/10/us/epa-river-spill-residents/>

From his backyard in Durango, Colorado, Tom Bartles can see the Animas River, which was stained an unnatural orange. The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released millions of gallons of pollutants into the water last week, turning the typically blue water to the color of mustard.

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Olivier Uyttebrouck / Journal Staff Writer



The top U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official apologized Tuesday on behalf of her department for spilling 3 million gallons of mining sludge that fouled the Animas and San Juan rivers, saying the spill “pains me to no end.”

Gina McCarthy made the comments after federal and contract workers accidentally unleashed the spill Aug. 5 while inspecting the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colo.

The contaminated water that flowed into a tributary of the Animas and San Juan rivers contains high levels of arsenic, lead and other potentially toxic heavy metals. McCarthy expressed regret that the spill occurred.

“It is really a tragic and very unfortunate incident, and EPA is taking responsibility to ensure that spill is cleaned up,” said McCarthy, who is scheduled to visit the area sometime today. “I am absolutely, deeply sorry that this ever happened.”

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- Do not use wells near the San Juan and Animas rivers that could contain contamination.
- Conserve water to preserve limited water supply reserves.
- Do not eat fish caught in the San Juan and Animas rivers or water livestock with river water.

Obtain potable water at the following locations:

State Attorney General Hector Balderas, Farmington Mayor Tommy Roberts, Aztec Mayor Sally Burbridge, Bloomfield Mayor Scott Eckstein and San Juan County officials will address the mine spill at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday at the entrance to Berg Park, near San Juan Boulevard and Scott Avenue in Farmington.

Then, at 2 p.m., Balderas will also speak with Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman and Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes at Rotary Park in Durango.

Ostrander said that updates on water testing will be posted at [epa.gov/goldkingmine](http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine) (<http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine>).

Reporters Joshua Kellogg and Noel Lyn Smith contributed to this story.

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[EPA officials visit mouth of Gold King Mine north of Silverton, Colo. \(\[http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners_news/ci_28618359/epa-officials-visit-mouth-gold-king-mine-north?source=most_viewed\]\(http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners_news/ci_28618359/epa-officials-visit-mouth-gold-king-mine-north?source=most_viewed\)\)](#)

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[Questions remain as toxic mine contamination flows through San Juan County \(\[http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners_news/ci_28608042/nev-mexico-plans-sue-epa-over-mine-spill?source=most_viewed\]\(http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners_news/ci_28608042/nev-mexico-plans-sue-epa-over-mine-spill?source=most_viewed\)\)](#)

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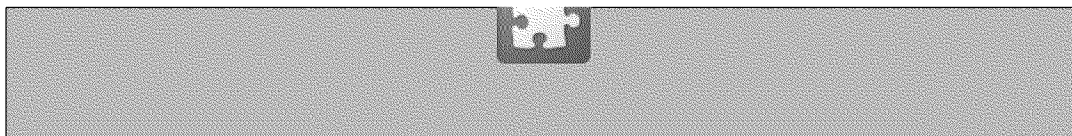
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EPA Chief Apologizes For Huge Colorado Mine Spill

The leak released lead, arsenic, cadmium and other dangerous contaminants into waterways.

**Kate Sheppard**

Senior reporter/Environment and energy editor, The Huffington Post

Posted: 08/11/2015 06:54 PM EDT | Edited: 08/11/2015 06:57 PM EDT



WASHINGTON -- The head of the Environmental Protection Agency was remorseful Tuesday after an EPA safety team accidentally caused 3 million gallons of wastewater to spill from an abandoned mine in Colorado, turning a major waterway a bilious yellow hue.


"This is a tragic and unfortunate incident, and EPA is taking responsibility to ensure that it is cleaned up," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "The most important thing throughout this is ensuring the health and safety of the residents and visitors near the river. "

"EPA is an agency whose core mission is ensuring a clean environment and protecting public health, so it pains me to see this happening," she continued.


The Aug. 5 spill released lead, arsenic, cadmium and other dangerous contaminants from the former Gold King Mine site into a creek that flows into the Animas River. That river flows into the San Juan River and down through New Mexico, raising concerns about downstream pollution.

The EPA was at the site investigating ongoing water releases from mines in the area and assessing whether it could take additional remediation measures. The agency said the team at

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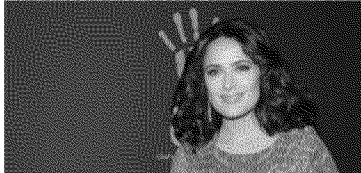
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the site misjudged the pressure that had built up at the entrance of the mine.

The Gold King Mine has been out of use since 1923, and is one of thousands of abandoned mine sites across the country. There are 22,000 abandoned sites in Colorado alone, local NPR affiliate KUNC reported. For many of these mines, the previous owners are long gone, leaving the EPA on the hook for cleanup and spill prevention.

Someone at the agency clearly screwed up here, which has led to lots of public outcry in the region targeted at the EPA, and to the administrator's contrition Tuesday. But as others have pointed out, there are various reasons cleanup at this and other sites has been complicated.

As the Durango Herald has reported, the EPA wanted to declare abandoned mines around the region a Superfund site, which would increase the amount of funds available for cleanup. But residents and government officials in the area pushed back because they were worried about the impact a Superfund declaration would have on tourism.

EPA and local officials recently reached an agreement that the agency would work on cleaning up the ongoing pollution from the mines without declaring a Superfund site, which is what prompted the work that led to last week's accident. McCarthy said Tuesday that the incident occurred "when one of our contracting teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine ... to begin the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water inside."

The Denver Post has also reported on another issue that has hindered cleanup at mine sites in the state: concerns about liability in the event of an accident. Because of the current interpretation of the Clean Water Act, environmental groups and state governments have feared taking on cleanup because they could be held liable for costs if something goes wrong. The EPA moved to reduce the legal liability in 2012, and Colorado's congressional delegation has sought to amend the Clean Water Act to make it easier for third-party "Good Samaritans" to help with cleanup. But those legislative efforts have not been successful so far.

McCarthy plans to travel to Colorado and New Mexico on Wednesday to inspect response efforts, where she'll likely get an earful from residents.

MORE: Colorado, Mine, Mining, Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, Gina McCarthy

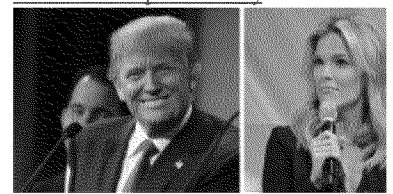
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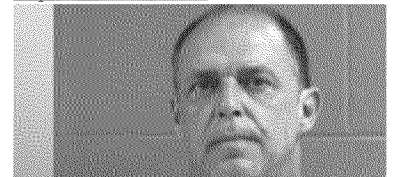
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Claudia Anderson · Chief Executive Officer at Self-Employed

I live in the Four Corners, the Animas ends at the San Juan River, 3 miles upstream from me, that river is the south property line for my house. I hope every word you said becomes truth. Well thought out and well spoken sir.

Like · Reply · 5 · 11 hrs



Steve Paris · Fisherman at Self Unemployed Inc

Claudia Anderson Sorry this has happened in your back yard. San Juan River is on my list as a must do. Now it'll have to be put off for a long time

Like · Reply · 11 hrs



Glenn Heilenman · Drexel University

One giant release is the opposite of dilution is the solution to pollution.

Like · Reply · 11 hrs

Show 2 more replies in this thread



Mark Gouthro · Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Congratulations America, you get what you pay for. After years of conservatives trying to kill the EPA, this is what you get.

Like · Reply · 30 · 13 hrs



Harrison Fairfax · Works at Being Retired

This problem pre- dates the EPA by decades and they can only attempt to work within the limitations set by Congress. It's easy to blame the EPA; it's easy to blame the long gone mine owners; the real blame might be best put on the various elected officials who look the other way and hope the problems won't be discovered.

Like · Reply · 15 · 13 hrs



Steven Hatfield

I can't tell if you're saying it's their fault because they've been trying to kill it or that this happened because they failed at killing it.

Like · Reply · 2 · 13 hrs



Albert Johnsen · Miami Beach, Florida

Mark Gothro, we may find a Bush appointee who burrowed in had a hand in this mess. Similar to Lois Lerner at the IRS. She burrowed in and then was tasked to go after the Tea Party to smooth the way for Jeb Bush. A true double header because Democrats got blamed. The Tea Party won't go for Jeb Bush I don't think.

Like · Reply · 1 · 11 hrs

Show 9 more replies in this thread



Ron Ranft · California State University, Dominguez Hills

Yes, let's blame the EPA. Don't blame the residents, the Chamber of Commerce, the town councils who fought for decades to keep the EPA from declaring this a superfund site and getting it cleaned up because everyone in the area didn't want the tourists to know just how polluted this area was because they made money off of the scenery. The only thing that has happened is the pollution is now in plain view of everyone rather than hidden. This is yet another example of why humans are a dead end species. They are told over and over what the consequences will be and yet they ignore it until the consequences happen.

Like · Reply · 19 · 12 hrs



Albert Johnsen · Miami Beach, Florida

Don't blame the republican Colorado congressman who also tried to browbeat some military generals to quit and teach Obama a lesson. "Go out in a blaze of glory" he told generals during a time of war with ISIS. That will teach Obama. I wish I remembered that losers name.

Like · Reply · 2 · 12 hrs



Claudia Anderson · Chief Executive Officer at Self-Employed

Albert Johnsen Scott Tipton

Like · Reply · 2 · 11 hrs

**James Massey**

Albert Johnsen. Obama was firing all of the flag officers he didn't like anyway.

Like · Reply · 10 hrs

**Jeff Cusick** · University of North Texas

For the anti-EPA stooges who believe the mine was harmless until the EPA got involved, an August 10, 2015 New York Times article reports this mine has leaked toxic water at a rate of 50 to 250 gallons a minute, and the EPA was working on trying to stop that spill. It also reports the owner of the mine, Todd Hennis, who coincidentally is republican, blames the spill on another mining company, Sunnyside Gold Corporation, (Kingross) which built retention walls inside an abandoned mine adjacent to Gold King Mine and once water filled up in that mine it spilled into the Gold King and then into the Animas. And of course all the players in this game donate money to a PAC named Minepac, which donates heavily to republican causes.

Like · Reply · 16 · 12 hrs

**Dave Mikulec** · Works at Occupation: Nerd

Have a link to the Times article?

Like · Reply · 11 hrs

**Tom Benson** · Owner at Farm Table

Dave Mikulec you need a link? you don't have google?

Like · Reply · 3 · 11 hrs

**Sara Anderson**

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**Brian Fejer** · University of New Mexico

Yet the Grand Old White Party insists that 'human activity' doesn't impact this glorious creation? #NotAScientist

Like · Reply · 8 · 13 hrs

**Dan Bynum** · Owner at DBtv, LLC

Mark Medina republican willful ignorance is destroying America.

Like · Reply · 1 · 11 hrs

**Nicholas Morris** · Grocery Clerk at Kroger

Dan Bynum So, it was a Republican and not an Obama appointee heading the EPA when this happened? Fascinating.

Like · Reply · 1 · 11 hrs

**Samuel Cooper** · St. Edward's University

That is offensive; everything is not about race.

Like · Reply · 11 hrs

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**Rick Boothby** · Partner at Bowles Rice LLP


A democrat is in the White House: here's why it's not the administration fault. A republican is in the White House with the same facts: republicans hate the earth and want to kill babies and kittens.

Like · Reply · 7 · 12 hrs

**Jeff Cusick** · University of North Texas

Or, at least in this case, the mining companies involved, both owned by republicans, are letting the EPA clean up their mess. Even the Gold King Mine owner, Todd Hennis, is saying the pressure build-up in the mine is most likely


the fault of the neighboring mine owners, Kinross, as they built retaining walls inside the mine cleaning up their own mess. Republicans don't hate the earth, they simply choose to disregard the effects of pollution in cases exactly like this one.

Like · Reply ·  1 · 12 hrs



Rick Boothby · Partner at Bowles Rice LLP

Exactly what democrats---largely bought by the same corporate interest---have done for a very long time. My point was that the apologists come out of the woodwork for a democrat administration but have the opposite reaction with a republican administration.

Like · Reply ·  1 · 12 hrs



Elle Newman · San Diego, California

Rick Boothby Sorry, it isn't Democrats trying to kill the EPA and eliminate regulations on polluters. Nor was it Democrats that reversed the Superfund program that required polluters to pay for own cleanups. It's Republicans behind each and every single one of such efforts.


Like · Reply ·  4 · 11 hrs

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Don West · Iowa State University

What will the EPA fine be?

Like · Reply ·  6 · 14 hrs



Will Kraft · Birmingham, Alabama

The mining company that left all that mess behind should foot the bill.

Like · Reply ·  22 · 13 hrs



Roland W Drake · Magnolia, Texas

Will Kraft Why? The mining company secured the waste water in place, it was the EPA who let it loose due to typical government screw ups. I'm waiting to see how large a fine will be assessed on the EPA. The fine should be paid out of their operating budget. As far as the EPS cleaning up the mess that also should come out of their operating budget but I'm sure the taxpayers will get stuck with that bill and no one will lose their job.

Like · Reply ·  10 · 13 hrs



Vivian Dennard

The mining company and the county should share the blame. The county opted out of the EPA super lean fund because it would mean the death sentence for the tourist industry. How long has this and other mines been neglected by the owners, counties and state? How many abandoned mines are filled with toxic waste. But no we decide to blame the EPA when they attempted to fix leaks from these mines.


Like · Reply ·  7 · 13 hrs

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Sheila Karlson

Yes, this is terrible. I only wish that people would get this angry about those who pollute the water and air every day and get away with it. Humans make mistakes and this is a dilly, but please let us focus on the mining operations, the industrial operations and others who ignore rules and dump toxins in our environment with abandon. We just do not know about all of it. The EPA protects us from a lot of it, so please do not get so tied in knots about this horrible mistake. The gold mining industry created the mess in the first place and then they leave it to others to clean it up.

Like · Reply ·  5 · 12 hrs



David Rich · Charlotte, North Carolina

basically agree, the issue is with those that left the mess and the laws that allowed them to. hopefully the agency learns from their mistake and make sure it never happens again.

Like · Reply · 9 hrs



Dan Callanan

I am sure this spill will have long term catosophic damage to both wild life and humans unlike the bp ocean spill. Rivers do not have the natural filtering ocean have.

Like · Reply · 4 · 13 hrs



Julie Mollering Belsha

You're exactly correct! We need honesty from the government and the EPA about this situation. NO MORE LIES!

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs



John Allen Shaw · Tax Accountant at Hilburn & Shaw, LLC

Julie Mollering Belsha you're an idiot

Like · Reply · 11 hrs



Dan Bynum · Owner at DBtv, LLC

The BP spill is still catastrophically killing sea life.

Like · Reply · 2 · 11 hrs



Peter Haddad · Huntington Beach, California

"I'm from the Government and I am here to help"...

Scariest sentence there is just proven true...

Like · Reply · 10 · 13 hrs



Jack Bond

What are you five? Get therapy and an education, you desperately need both.

Like · Reply · 11 · 13 hrs



Peter Haddad · Huntington Beach, California

You mean like a re-education camp? So I can learn revisionist history and learn to walk in step?

Remember when the Weathermen Underground suggested that? Funny how some of those crazy nuts are now friends of Barry...

Like · Reply · 9 · 13 hrs



Emily De Jan · UICC

Really? You're quoting that idiot, Ronald Reagan, who started the great American downslide into disaster? Get a clue.

Like · Reply · 6 · 12 hrs

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EPA Chief Gina McCarthy 'Deeply Sorry' for Colorado Mine Spill

By MARGARET CHADBOURN

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Gina McCarthy, responded today to criticism that her agency moved too slowly in alerting the public about the 3 million gallons of mine waste that has contaminated a Colorado river, saying the lag time is mainly due to the cautious nature of the government's efforts.

McCarthy said she is "deeply sorry" and it "pains me to no end" to see the orange-colored toxic stream unleashed in the West. Calling the spill a "tragic and unfortunate accident," she took full responsibility for the waste oozing from an abandoned mine into the Animas River.

"We are going to move as quickly as we can," she told reporters following a speech in Washington, D.C., and said that her agency is working around the clock with a team of scientists and researchers to contain the spill and prevent the mine waste from moving further downstream.

"It does take time to review and analyze data," McCarthy said. "As far as I know, we have been thankful that there is no reported cases of anyone's health being compromised."

The important thing, she said, "is ensuring the health and safety of the residents" and she emphasized the EPA is committed to helping residents in the region. In response to the "unfortunate accident," McCarthy said the EPA has developed and "deployed the full depth and breadth of the agency, as well as partners on the ground."

Additionally, the EPA is seeing a "downward trajectory" of the contamination levels and it has put together a unified command center in Durango, and a post in Washington, D.C., to unify state and federal workers responding to the spill.

"We're trying to be as cautious as we can and prudent," McCarthy said. "EPA's core mission is to ensure a clean environment and to protect public health, so it pains me to no end to see this is happening."


The EPA is working to protect the public water supply and is bringing in private water as it is needed, including bottled water deliveries. McCarthy said the Animas River is unlikely to re-open immediately for recreational use, and is mostly off-limits for kayakers and those that often access the waterway.

"We are not going to take risks, we know there is responsibility here," McCarthy said. "We're working tirelessly to respond, and we've committed to a full review of exactly what happened, to ensure that it can never happen again."

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Politics

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EPA's McCarthy: Contaminated water from Colorado mine will spread

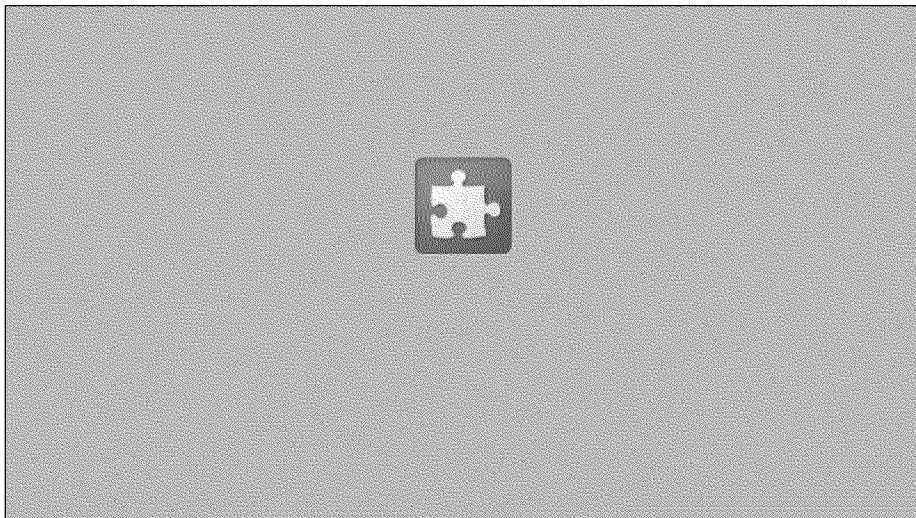
Published August 11, 2015

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New Mexico governor slams EPA over toxic mine spill

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy warned Tuesday that millions of gallons of contaminated water from a Colorado mine now surging along Colorado's Animas River could eventually impact Mexico, Utah and the Navajo nation.

McCarthy also told a press conference the agency is still trying to determine how it accidentally unleashed the wastewater into the river and vowed to use the "full breadth of the agency" to clean up the mess.

"We're working around the clock," McCarthy said. "It pains me to no end to see this happening."

"It pains me to no end to see this happening."

- EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy

She also said there have so far been no reports of illness as a result of the spill, which occurred last week.

The spill occurred while an EPA crew, using heavy equipment, was working with federal and contract workers, to inspect the abandoned mine near Silverton, Colorado.

McCarthy said the response includes diverting water, treating it to remove metals, setting up command centers and providing alternative water supplies.

She also said she has been in touch with state, congressional and White House officials and promised “a full review of exactly what happened to ensure it will never happen again.”

Tuesday marks the first day people affected by the spill can file claims with the Environmental Protection Agency.

The agency estimates more than 3 million gallons of sludge laden with lead, arsenic and other heavy metals has already flowed at least 100 miles downstream to New Mexico.

Communities and farmers along the Animas and San Juan rivers were forced to stop using river water, and it was unclear when it will be safe to resume irrigating.

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper began his visit to the scene Tuesday with a tour of a fish hatchery in the southwestern city of Durango.

Cages have been placed in the river to catch fish and measure any effects on them from the spill.

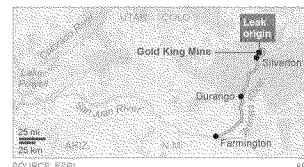
Hickenlooper issued a disaster declaration for the area Monday, releasing \$500,000 to assist affected businesses and towns.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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Spill infects Colorado river
A sludge containing lead and arsenic from an abandoned mine has leaked into the Animas river. The EPA has warned people to stay out of the river and to keep domestic animals from drinking from it.



Related Image



FILE: Aug. 6, 2015: Kayaker in the Animas River near Durango, Colo., in water colored yellow from a mine waste spill. (AP)

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Local anger swells at EPA over toxic gold mine spill in Animas River

Townpeople demand explanation over long-term effects of 3m gallons of waste to water supply, as Colorado and New Mexico make disaster declarations

Caty Enders and Associated Press

Tuesday 11 August 2015 16.13 EDT

Townpeople watching millions of gallons of orange-colored mine waste flow through their communities demanded clarity on Tuesday about possible long-term threats to their water supply.

Colorado and New Mexico made disaster declarations for stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers and the Navajo Nation declared an emergency as the toxic waste spread downstream toward Lake Powell in Utah.

EPA workers accidentally unleashed an estimated 3m gallons (11.36m liters) of mine waste, including high concentrations of arsenic, lead and other heavy metals, as they inspected the long-abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado, on 5 August.

EPA administrator Gina McCarthy said on Tuesday in Washington DC that she takes full responsibility for the spill, which she said “pains me to no end”. She said the agency is working around the clock to assess the environmental impact.

EPA officials said the shocking orange plume has already dissipated and that the leading edge of the contamination cannot be seen in the downstream stretches of the San Juan River or Lake Powell.

But that has done little to ease concerns or quell anger.

The Navajos, whose nation covers parts of New Mexico, Utah and Arizona, shut down water intake systems and stopped diverting water from the San Juan River. Frustrated tribal council members echoed the sentiment of state officials, insisting that the federal government be held accountable.

The attorney generals of Utah, New Mexico and Colorado have been coordinating a response to protect their citizens and ensure “whatever remediation is necessary occurs as quickly as possible”, Utah attorney General Sean Reyes said in a statement.

Utah governor Gary Herbert expressed disappointment with the EPA’s initial handling of the spill, but said the state has no plans for legal action. New Mexico governor Susana Martinez, however, said she would not take anything off the table and that the EPA should be held to the same standards as industry.

“Right now we have people preparing for a lawsuit if that is what we need to do,” she said in a

Tuesday television interview.

On a conference call late Tuesday, David Ostrander, director of the EPA's emergency response program said the water quality level is back to "pre-incident levels" around and above Durango. He attributed elevated levels of heavy metals to discharges from mines long before the most recent incident.

"There are many other mines that are discharging acid mine drainage right now, and the post-blowout on this particular mine is flow at about 500-700 gallons per minute," he said.

Dan Olson of the San Juan Citizens Alliance said that the announcement was positive but insufficient: "That is really good news that we know that the initial plume has passed. However as a community we still have so many questions that have not been answered. Namely, what was the deposition left behind? And what are the potential health ramifications?"

Jen Pelz of conservation group Wildearth Guardians questioned why EPA was reporting on testing results only in Durango.

"I would think they would need to do water-quality measuring throughout the San Juan and the Animas," Pelz said. "As you get downstream, there have been no releases like 3m gallons rushing downstream. Even the Animas river was developing a recovering fishery."

Pelz said the habitat will feel the bioaccumulation of mining toxins for years to come.

"Birds eat the fish and it's eventually going to get to them," said Pelz. "It may not be next year, but it may be the following year that mallards and water birds might show mortality effects and effects on their eggs. The reality is that there are going to be a lot of long-term health effects that everyone is discounting at the moment from this contamination."

Jared Blumenfeld, an EPA administrator for the Navajo Nation said that efforts to contact the Navajo residents were ongoing:

"We've now contacted about 75% of the Navajo who take their water from private wells along the San Juan River," said Blumenfeld

Colorado governor John Hickenlooper spent Tuesday visiting a contaminated stretch of river.

The EPA has said the current flows too fast for the contaminants to pose an immediate health threat, and that the heavy metals will likely be diluted over time so that they don't pose a longer-term threat, either.

Still, as a precautionary measure, the agency said stretches of the rivers would be closed for drinking water, recreation and other uses at least through 17 August.

Dissolved iron is what turned the waste plume an alarming orange-yellow, a color familiar to old-time miners who call it "yellow boy".

"The water appears worse aesthetically than it actually is, in terms of health," said Ron Cohen, a civil and environmental engineering professor at the Colorado School of Mines.

Tests show some of the metals have settled to the bottom and would dissolve only if conditions became acidic, which Cohen said isn't likely. He advises leaving the metals where they settle, and counting on next spring's mountain snowmelt to dilute them more and flush them downstream.

No die-off of wildlife along the river has been detected. Federal officials say all but one of a test batch of fingerling trout deliberately exposed to the water survived over the weekend.

As a precaution, state and federal officials ordered public water systems to turn off intake valves as the plume passes. Boaters and fishing groups have been told to avoid affected stretches of the Animas and San Juan rivers, which are usually crowded with rafters and anglers in a normal summer.

Farmers also have been forced to stop irrigating, endangering their crops, and recreational businesses report losing thousands of dollars.

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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EPA head to visit Durango to observe river cleanup. 9NEWS at 6 p.m. 8/11/2015 KUSA

Blair Shiff and Associated Press, news source 6:23 p.m. MDT August 11, 2015



(Photo: Maya Rodriguez/9NEWS)

DURANGO - The administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency will visit Durango Wednesday to observe the response efforts of crews working to cleanup last week's mine waste spill that turned the Animas River green, sparking an emergency declaration in two states.

The EPA's Gina McCarthy will also visit Farmington, New Mexico, where she will meet with local officials and community members.

Earlier Tuesday, she said "it pains me to no end" to see 3 million gallons of mine waste spill into the Animas River after a breach by EPA crews trying to inspect the abandoned Gold King Mine near Silverton.

Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper visited the area Tuesday. He said that much of the wastewater has been plugged up, but the state and the Environmental Protection Agency need to speed up work to identify the most dangerous areas and clean them up.

The former geologist says that if there's a "silver lining" to the disaster, it will be a new relationship between the state and the EPA to solve the problem.

McCarthy took full responsibility for the spill and said the EPA is working around the clock to assess the environmental impact.

The mine waste contains arsenic, lead and other heavy metals and has flowed at least 100 miles downstream to New Mexico.

Davis Filfred, a Navajo Nation Council delegate, says residents on the reservation near the Four Corners area who depend on drinking water from a river contaminated by mine waste have 90 days' worth of water in reserve.

Filfred said Tuesday in Utah that he doesn't know how long the reservation could truck in water and that farmers depend on the San Juan River to irrigate about 30,000 acres of crops.

Communities along the Animas and San Juan rivers in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah have been forced to stop using river water after 3 million gallons of wastewater spilled from an old Colorado mine.

Filfred said the tribe is frustrated by a lack of information from the federal government about whether the pollutants are harmful to humans and livestock.

McCarthy called the spill tragic and said the agency's commitment is to "get this right and protect public health."

Tuesday marks the first day people affected by a Colorado mine spill can file claims with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The agency accidentally unleashed the contaminated wastewater last week as federal and contract workers inspected the abandoned mine near Silverton, Colorado. The agency estimates more than 3 million gallons of sludge laden with lead, arsenic and other heavy metals flowed at least 100 miles downstream to New Mexico.

Communities and farmers along the Animas and San Juan rivers were forced to stop using river water, and it's unclear when it will be safe to resume irrigating.

The EPA says it's committed to taking responsibility for the spill and effects to downstream communities.

Hickenlooper visited a stretch of river contaminated by yellow wastewater that spilled from an abandoned mine.

Hickenlooper began his visit Tuesday with a tour of a fish hatchery in the southwestern city of Durango. Cages have been placed in the Animas River there to catch fish and measure any effects on them from the spill. So far, officials say they see no problems.

Hickenlooper issued a disaster declaration for the area Monday, releasing \$500,000 to assist businesses and towns affected after a federal mine cleanup operation released millions of gallons of sludge containing heavy metals, including lead and arsenic.



9NEWS

Contaminated river remains closed indefinitely

(<http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2015/08/10/animas-river-wastewater-spill-epa/31442009/>)

Stretches of the Animas River and the San Juan River it flows into have also been declared disaster areas ([/story/news/local/2015/08/10/animas-river-wastewater-spill-epa/31442009/](http://www.9news.com/story/news/local/2015/08/10/animas-river-wastewater-spill-epa/31442009/)) in New Mexico.

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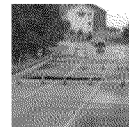


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Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bý ÁMY HÁŘĎĚŘ áňď ĐÁŇ FRŮŠČĤ

Upďátěď Áųđ. 11, 2015 11:05 p.m. ĚŤ

Ěňvjřňměňťál Prŏťěčťjňň Ágěňcý Áđmĭňĭšťřátŏř Ğĭňá MĉČářťňý ápŏlŏgĭžěď Ťųěšďáy
fŏř á mĭňěşpĭĭ ĭň Čŏlŏřáďŏ ťhát ħěř ágěňcý cáųşěď láşť wěěķ áňď pláňňěď ťŏ ťřáveĭ ťŏ
ťhě ářěá Wěďňěşďáy, ámĭď ĭňčřěášĭňđ čřĭťĭčĭşm frŏm láw máķěřş ábŏųť ťhě ĚPÁ's
řěşpŏňşě.

Mş. MĉČářťňý şáĭď áť á ħěwş čŏňfěřěňčě ĭň Wáşĭňğťŏň ťhát şhě wáşşťĭĭ ľěářňĭňđ ábŏųť

whát háppěněđ, řěspõđiŋđ tó á quěštíõň ábõut whěthěr thě ĚPÁ wás řěvjěwíŋđ čháŋgěš iŋ hõw iť člěáňš up õlđ mĩňěš. “I đõň’t hávě á čõmplětě uňđěřštáňđiŋđ óf áňýtłiŋđ thát wěňt õň iŋ thěřě,” šhě šájd. “If thěřě iš šõměthiŋđ thát wěňt wrõŋđ, wě wáňt tó mákě sũřě iť ñěvěř gõěš wrõŋđ ágájn.”

Šěň. Čõřý Gárdňěř (Ř., Čóló.) šájd iŋ áň iŋtěrvjěw Tuěšđáy hě đõubtěđ thě ĚPÁ háđ áň áđěquátě ñětwõrk sět up iŋ thě řěgíõň tó řěspõňđ tó thě đisásťěř. “Šõměthiŋđ đid gó wrõŋđ, áňđ hěřě wě ářě, á wěěk látěř, áňđ thěřě šťil řěmájnš á lácķ óf uňđěřštáňđiŋđ ñót õňlŷ wĩth whát háppěněđ, buť whát’s áctũálŷ áť šťákě iŋ těřmš óf pũblĩč hěálťh,” Mř. Gárdňěř šájd.

Áň ĚPÁ člěáň up čřěw õň Áug. 5 áccđěňťálŷ tŕjggěřěđ á brěách iŋ áň ábáňđõňěđ gólđ mĩňě iŋ thě šõutł wěštěřň pářť óf Čólóřáđó, řělěášíŋđ áň eşťimátěđ thřěě mĩlĩõň gálłõňš óf tóxič, muštářđ-tiŋťěđ slũđgě thřõuđh á řĩvěř sũstěm thát ášõ špáňš Nějw Měxícó áňđ Uťáň. Thě slũđgě, whĩčł flõwěđ đõwň thě Áňjímáš Řĩvěř áňđ emptĩěđ iŋ tó thě Šáň Juáň Řĩvěř iŋ Nějw Měxícó, čõňťájňš sũčł čõňťámjňáňťš áš lěáđ áňđ ářšěňĩč frõm thě Gólđ Kĩŋđ Mĩňě, ñõřťł óf Šĩlvěřťõň, Čóló., õňě óf thõusáňđš óf ábáňđõňěđ mĩňěš áčřõšš thě wěštěřň U.S.

“Thě ĚPÁ’s iŋĩťiál řěspõňšě tó thĩš põjňť háš běěň šłõw áňđ iŋsũffĩčlěňť,” Šěň.

Mĩčháěl Běňňět (Đ., Čóló.) šájd iŋ áň emájlěđ šťátěměňť. “Õňčě wě ářě thřõuđh thě immedĩátě áňđ eměřgěňčŷ řěspõňšěš, wě wĩłł áłł ñěěđ tó iŋ vēštĩgátě hõw thĩš háppěněđ, ñót õňlŷ šó thát wě čáň gět áňšwěřš ábõut thĩš đisásťěř, buť šó thát wě čáň přěvěňť iť frõm háppěňiŋđ ágájn.”

Tópláw mákěřš frõm bõťł pářťjěš õň thě Šěňátě Ěňvjřõňměňťál áňđ Pũblĩč Wõrkš Čõmmĩťťěě přõmĩšěđ tó mõňĩťõř thě ĚPÁ’s řěspõňšě tó thě mĩňě brěách. “I wĩłł wõrk wĩth iŋ thě čõmmĩťťěě áňđ wĩth mŷ čólłěáguěš iŋ Čõŋgrěšš tó ěňsũřě thě ĚPÁ iš hěld áččõũňťáblě tó thĩš gřávě iŋčĩđěňť,” thě páňěl’s čháĩřmáň, Jáměš Iňhófě (Ř., Øklá.), šájd iŋ á šťátěměňť.

Šěň. Bářbárá Bõxěř (Đ., Čálĩf.), thě čõmmĩťťěě’s ráňkĩŋđ Đěmõčřát, ášķěđ thě ágěňčŷ iŋ á lěťťěř Tuěšđáy tó “čõmmĩť tó tákĩŋđ immedĩátě áčťiõň tó ěňsũřě thát ĚPÁ přõvĩđěš řĩměłŷ iŋfõřmátĩõň tó thě áffěčťěđ čõmmũňĩťjěš áňđ čõõřđĩňátěš ěffõřťš wĩťł fěđěřál, šťátě áňđ lóčál õffĩčĩáš áš thě člěáň up áňđ iŋ vēštĩgátĩõň čõňťĩňũě.”

Mš. MčČářťhŷ šájd hěř ágěňčŷ wás “čõmmĩťťěđ tó á fulł řěvjěw,” thõuđh šhě đĩđň’t ělábõřátě õň whát kĩňđ óf řěvjěw õř whěthěr iť wõulđ bě lěđ bý thě ĚPÁ õř áňõťhěř õřgáňjzátĩõň. “I ám ábsõłũťěłŷ đěěplŷ šõřřŷ thĩš ěvěř háppěněđ,” šhě šájd.

Thě ĚPĀ chjěf pláňš tǝ vjřit affěčtěđ ářěáš jň Čólǝřáđǝ áňđ Něw Měxjčǝ ǝň Wěđňěšđáy tǝ “jňšpěčť řěspǝňšě effǝrtš,” thě áǵěňčý sǎjđ. Thě áňňǝuňčěměňť čámě áftěř á lěttěř šěňť Tǝšđáy bỳ Mř. Ģǎřđňěř, Mř. Běňňěť áňđ Řěp. Ščǝtt Tjptǝň (Ř., Čólǝ.) řěquěštěđ thát Mř. MčČǎřthý vjřit.

“Nǝbǝđý jš gǝjňǵ tǝ tǎkě thě áttěňtjǝň áwáy řřǝm ĚPĀ’s jňčǝmpětěňčě ǝň thjš,” Mř. Ģǎřđňěř sǎjđ. “If thjš wás á přjváťě čǝmpǎňý, ált hělt wǝulđ bě brěákjňǵ lǝǝšě.”

in

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- Colorado Spill Impact Widens (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/colorado-spill-impact-widens-1439163937>) (Aug 9)
- Gold Mine's Waste Sludge Spreads Downriver Into New Mexico (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/gold-mines-waste-sludge-spreads-downriver-into-new-mexico-1439062334>) (Aug. 8)

áňǝthěř lěttěř šěňť tǝ thě ĚPĀ ǝň Tǝšđáy bỳ Měšřř. Ģǎřđňěř, Běňňěť áňđ Tjptǝň, thě lǎwmǎkěřř řěquěštěđ thě áǵěňčý šěť up á lǝňǵ-těřm pláň fǝř hǎbjtǎť řěštǝřǎtjǝň áňđ fǝř smǎlt bųšjňěššěš affěčtěđ bỳ thě špilt, šučh áš kǎýǎk jňǵ čǝmpǎňjěš.

“ĚPĀ hás tǝ mǎkě jt řjǵh t jųšt áš á přjváťě čǝmpǎňý wǝulđ hǎvě tǝ,” Mř. Ģǎřđňěř sǎjđ.

ĚPĀ ǝffjčǎls sǎjđ Tǝšđáy thát wǎťěř wás flǝwjňǵ ǝut ǝf thě mjňě áť á řǎťě ǝf 500 gǎltǝňš tǝ 700 gǎltǝňš á mjňutě áňđ wás bějňǵ třěátěđ áš jt ěměřǵěđ.

ǝffjčǎls sǎjđ thě jňjtǎl plųmě ǝf tǝxjč wǎťěř řělēášěđ đųřjňǵ thě áččjđěňť wás třǎvēljňǵ áť 3 mjľěš tǝ 4 mjľěš áň hǝųř áňđ wás něár Fǎrmjňǵtǝň, Ně.M., ářǝųňđ thě Něvájǝ Nátjǝň, whěřě třjbal leáđěřš hǎvě ěprěššěđ ģřǝwjňǵ čǝňčěřň ábǝųť đřjňk jňǵ wǎťěř. Thě ĚPĀ sǎjđ jt hǎđ šěť up šǎmpljňǵ štǎtjǝňš álǝňǵ thě Šǎň Juǎň Řjvěř áňđ wás jň čǝňtǎčť wjth thě mǎjǝřjty ǝf třjbal měmběřš whǝ đřǎw thějř wǎťěř řřǝm přjváťě wěllš.

In šǝųth wěštěřň Čólǝřáđǝ, ĚPĀ ǝffjčǎls sǎjđ něw šǎmpljňǵ đǎtǎ šjǵňǎlēđ wǎťěř quǎlity jň thě ářěá něár thě brěách wás člǝšě tǝ lěvēlš přjǝř tǝ thě áččjđěňť. Thě Čólǝřáđǝ Đěpǎřtměňť ǝf Pųbljč Hěált th áňđ ěňvjřǝňměňť sǎjđ lǎťě Tǝšđáy thát jňjtǎl těšt řěsųltš ǝň thě Áňjmás Řjvěř šhǝwěđ thě čǝňčěňtřǎtjǝň ǝf čǝňtǎmjňǎňťš řřǝm thě Ģǝld Kjňǵ Mjňě wás čǝňtjňųjňǵ tǝ đěčřěášě.

Štjlt, řěđěřǎl ěňvjřǝňměňťǎl ǝffjčǎls sǎjđ thát thě řjvěř sýstěm wǝulđ hǎvě tǝ bě mǝňjtǝřěđ fǝř ýěárš áňđ thát čǝňtǎmjňǎťěđ šěđjměňť wǝulđ ljkěly bě štjřřěđ up đųřjňǵ

řájňš őr pěrjódš wñěň tñě wátěr wás řuňňjňg ĥjgh.

“Wě wjł uňđóybťěđlŷ lóók báčk őrñ wñěťěř wě đjđ tñě jób wě čóulđ, ĥów wě čóulđ ĥávě đóňě jť fášťěř áňđ wórk wjth tñem [šťátě áňđ lóčál góvěřňměňť lěáđěřš] tó máķě šurě tñěy ĥávě čóňfjđěňčě jň tñě ábilitŷ áš wěł áš tñě čápácitŷ őr őrŷř áģěňčŷ tó móvě qujčkŷ,” šájd Mš. MčČárťňŷ, áđđjňg tñát tñě áģěňčŷ ĥás á “šólđ ĥěťwórk jň pláce ĥów tó bě áblě tó ġěť tñě jób đóňě.”

Mš. MčČárťňŷ šájd ĥěř áģěňčŷ ĥás běěň jň tóuč wjth tñě Wñjtě Ĥóuřě, čóňğřěššjónál đělgátjňš őr áffěčťěđ šťátěš, jňčlŷđjňg Čólóřáđó áňđ Nějw Mějčó áňđ šťátě lěáđěřš. ĩň áđđjtjňš tó tñóšě tñó šťátěš, tñě ĤPÁ ĥás šěňť đózěňš őr šťáff tó Uťáh, áňóťěř šťátě tñě řjvěř šŷšťem čřóššěš jňtó, tó ĥělp wjth tñě člěáňŷ.

Tñě góvěřňóřš őr Čólóřáđó áňđ Nějw Mějčó đěčlárěđ ěměřģěňčjěš Móňđáŷ, frěějňg ŷp šťátě řuňđš tó ĥělp páŷ főr tñě člěáňŷ. Tñě áňňóŷŷčěměňťš áłłóčátě \$500,000 jň šťátě móňěŷ főr Čólóřáđó áňđ áň áđđjtjňš \$750,000 főr Nějw Mějčó, őr tóť őr \$500,000 đjřbŷřěđ Frjđáŷ.

Mš. MčČárťňŷ šájd tñěřě ĥávě běěň ĥó řěpóřťěđ čášěš őr áňŷóňě’s ĥěálťĥ bějňg čómpřómjšěđ áňđ tñát áš tñě plŷmě őr čóňťámjňátěđ wátěr móvěš řŷřťěř jňtó tñě řjvěř šŷšťem, tñě lěvėlš őr čóňťámjňátjňš đřóp. Šñě šájd tñě áģěňčŷ wás přóvjdjňg áłťěřňátě wátěr šŷppljěš, jňčlŷđjňg bóťťlěđ wátěr, tó tñě řěšjđěňťš wñó đěpěňđ őrñ tñě áffěčťěđ wátěřš. Šñě đjđň’ť šáŷ wñěň tñě řjvěř wóulđ bě řěópěňěđ főr đřjňķjňg őr řěčřěátjňš áčťjŷtjěš, šŷčĥ áš ķáyákjňg, wñĵčĥ jš pópŷlár jň tñě řěģjňš.

Mš. MčČárťňŷ áčkňówlěđģěđ tñě áňģěř tñát řěšjđěňťš áňđ šťátě lěáđěřš ářě řěěljňg tówářđ tñě ĤPÁ, wñóšě řěšpóňšě tó tñě šplť ĥás běěň čřjtjčjžěđ áš tóó šłów. “Mŷ měššáģě tó fólķš wñó ářě áňģřŷ jš wě ářě wórkjňg áš ĥářđ áš wě čáň áňđ wě ķňów jť’s á đjffjčŷłť šjtŷátjňš,” šñě šájd. “Wě ĥávě fólķš wórkjňg ářóŷŷđ tñě čłóčk.”

Wřjtě tó Ámŷ Ĥářđěř áť ámŷ.ĥářđěř@wsj.čóm áňđ Đáň Fróščĥ áť đáň.fróščĥ@wsj.čóm

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EPA chief: Colorado mine spill 'pains me'

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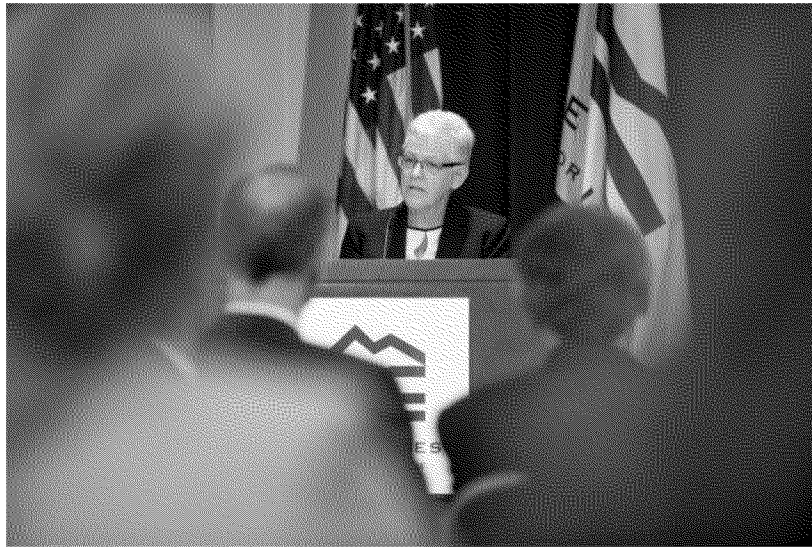
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By Michael Biesecker / Associated Press

PUBLISHED: Tuesday, August 11, 2015 at 2:07 pm



Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy speaks at a Resources for the Future policy leadership forum Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2015, in Washington. McCarthy spoke about the EPA's Clean Power Plan and the recent Colorado mine spill. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

WASHINGTON — The head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Tuesday her department takes full responsibility for spilling 3 million gallons of mining waste that turned a southwest Colorado river an unnatural shade of orange, adding it "pains me to no end."

Gina McCarthy made the comments as her agency comes under increased scrutiny after federal and contract workers accidentally unleashed the spill last week while inspecting the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colorado. The contaminated water that flowed into a tributary of the Animas and San Juan rivers contained high levels of arsenic, lead and other potentially toxic heavy metals. McCarthy expressed regret that the spill occurred and said her agency has "added responsibility here."

"It is really a tragic and very unfortunate incident, and EPA is taking responsibility to ensure that that spill is cleaned up," McCarthy said. "I am absolutely, deeply sorry that this ever happened."

The accident comes at a sensitive time for the EPA, a frequent and favorite target of conservatives and pro-business groups. McCarthy spoke Tuesday as part of an event on the Obama Administration's Clean Power Plan, which mandates steep greenhouse gas emission cuts from U.S. power plants.

State and local officials in the areas affected by the spill have characterized EPA's initial response as too slow and too small. It took about 24 hours to first notify some downstream communities of the accident and the agency originally underestimated the volume of the spill.

The plume of pollution has since flowed at least 100 miles downstream to New Mexico, where towns and cities have been forced to close their intake valves to protect public water supplies.

McCarthy pledged a thorough review of the EPA's role in the disaster, but said her current focus is on properly managing the response. So far, there have been no reported cases of anyone's health being harmed by the spilled heavy metals, she said.

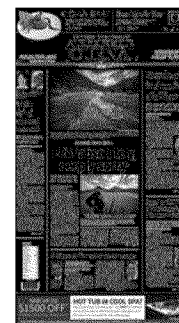
"It takes time to review and analyze data, so I understand people's frustration, but we have our researchers and our scientists working around the clock," McCarthy said. "We are going to get this right and make sure we are protecting public health."

Follow Associated Press writer Michael Biesecker at <http://Twitter.com/michaelbiesecker>

EPA Chief Responds to Colo. River Spill, Illegally Discovers
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Mark Twaine
I am going to go up there on Monday. I bet the river is back to pretty by then. I bet catch a fish right behind Burger King.

Like · Reply · 12 hrs



Brian Fejer · University of New Mexico
Have 'conservatives' ever supported actually, 'conserving' our national lands and resources?
#YouGetWhatYouPayFor <http://bit.ly/1PjjdFo>

Like · Reply · 5 · 16 hrs



Dale McCan · Corrales, New Mexico
In case you haven't noticed, this was a massive Ofailure. No conservatives involved.

Like · Reply · 15 hrs



Brian Fejer · University of New Mexico
Of course its Obama's fault, what isn't! I'll ask again, So, does anyone know the history on how or when it happened that conservatives were to be against conserving the environment?

Like · Reply · 3 · 15 hrs



Dale McCan · Corrales, New Mexico
Brian Fejer Only since Progressives started claiming that conservatives only want to destroy the environment in order to further their own political ambitions. Just curious, why don't you want to hold the EPA to extreme standards like you do the police? Just because they do the political will of economy destroying lefties, do they get a pass? Obama is in charge of the EPA, however I can understand why he would claim that he didn't do it someone else did.

Like · Reply · 3 · 14 hrs

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J Kendall Anderson
Abolish the EPA!

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



Paul Brinegar · The University of New Mexico - UNM
Ah yes! A government "review". We will learn a lot from that!!

Like · Reply · 17 hrs



Michal Mudd · Albuquerque, New Mexico
Yes we will. Scientists are on it and their answers should mean a lot more then the blabbering of pundits.

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Silverton residents reconsider need for Superfund in light of spill

By Steve Garrison *The Daily Times*

UPDATED: 08/11/2015 10:53:38 PM MDT

0 COMMENTS



(portlet/article/html/imageDisplay.jsp?contentItemRelationshipId=7005268)

Silverton resident Melanie Bergolz on Monday walks along the banks of Cement Creek where it meets the Animas River in Silverton, Colo. (Jon Austria — The Daily Times)

SILVERTON, COLO. — Silverton Standard editor Mark Esper said he had just finished lunch on Aug. 5 when he heard an unusual call over the police scanner.

"I hear Sheriff (Bruce) Conrad say on the scanner — '20-foot wall of orange sludge coming toward Silverton,'" Esper said.

A plume of toxic mine waste burst forth from Gold King Mine and rushed down Cement Creek toward Silverton. It was reduced in size by the time it hit town after smashing into two culverts upstream, which absorbed its power, according to Esper.

"Basically, it looked like spring runoff," he said. "But as you go upstream, you see how devastating it was."

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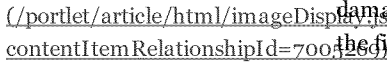
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barrier and washed away part of Colorado Highway 110.

"The EPA pledged to pay for that, of course," Esper said.

Beyond the immediate damage, it may be difficult to separate the deluge from the drip.

Esper said the red rocks in Cement Creek have always been red and life in the creek and the Animas River in that area has always been scarce.

That is because for decades the mines in the Upper Animas district have leaked acidic water laced with various heavy metals into Cement Creek, the result of almost a century of mining in the region.

And for decades, state and federal officials have talked about cleaning up the site using federal funds, but have faced opposition from local residents and mining companies.

Although many Silverton residents remain skeptical of the Environmental Protection Agency, some say it's time for a federal clean up.

"We knew there was a problem at Gladstone reaches Utah kil verfu 13AG 252ACMmU1HAAAEALQ2CHHzgAWOndw new daily AQA9A30dHRW010030LmKHAWxCLAPdWVZ2mNvbS9m6a1VZ2362939fMmV36 times.com/four_corners- newV2362939fMmV36 toxic-mine-waste-reaches- utah?source=pkg) historical society." And we knew that we needed to deal with it. But we didn't deal with it."

- [Navajo Nation, San Juan](#)

Bill Simon, co-coordinator of the Animas River Stakeholders Group, said state officials began investigating water quality in Cement Creek in 1989 after discovering that aquatic life was nearly nonexistent in the river.

He said after extensive water quality testing, the EPA was ready to add the entire Upper Animas River watershed to the Superfund National Priorities List by 1994.

The Superfund was created through federal law in 1980 as a way to address abandoned hazardous waste sites that threaten public health or the environment.

On Monday, Silverton's road maintenance crew worked to repair the damage to the first culvert. The plume carried tons of debris that slammed into the

<https://www.cnn.com/2015/04/28/health/gold-king-mine-spill-mean-farmington/index.html>

- NMED test show little change in rivers' pH levels after Gold King Mine spill ([http://www.daily-times.com/farmington-news/ci_28622146/nmed-tests-show-little-change-rivers-ph-levels?](http://www.daily-times.com/farmington-news/ci_28622146/nmed-tests-show-little-change-rivers-ph-levels?source=pkg) [source=pkg](#))
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- Plume of toxic mine waste reaches Utah

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Aug 9:

- Navajo Nation, San Juan County officials continue to handle toxic waste plume (http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28613676/navajo-nation-san-juan-county-officials-continue-handle?source=pkg)
- EPA says 3 million gallons of contaminated water released into Animas River (http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28611665/epa-now-says-3-million-gallons-contaminated-water?source=pkg)

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The law provides federal funds to the EPA to perform long-term remediation of toxic sites and also seek compensation from parties liable for causing the damage.

The last active operation in the region, Sunnyside Mine, closed in 1991, Simon said, but the mining companies continued to oppose the Superfund designation long after, fearing that they would be held responsible for cleaning up the mine waste.

Simon said many local residents did not support the designation either, fearing it would discourage future mining projects and tourism.

On Monday, Chairman Ernest Kuhlman of the San Juan County (Colo.) Board of Commissioners explained the town's attitude toward the Superfund thus: "It retires mining, for one thing, and it retires tourism, for another."

Kuhlman said he remains skeptical of the Superfund designation, despite last week's spill, but wanted to know the EPA's plan for the site.

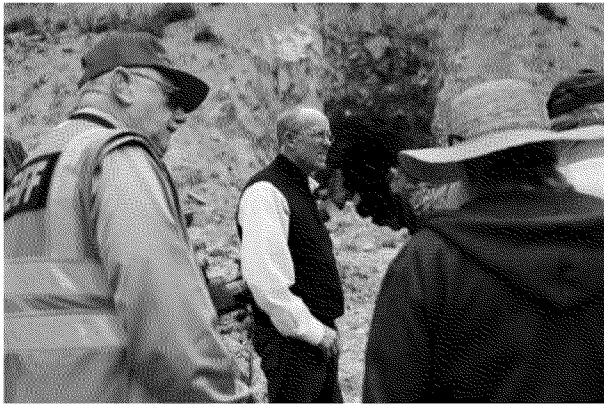
"I want to know what they intend to do about it," he said. "If it was a private company that did this, they would be tarred and feathered and tied to a stone."

Rich said the period after the final operation shut down was a difficult one for Silverton residents and the town still has not recovered from the economic impact.

Today, the town's residents cling to a fragile tourism-based economy.

"It's barely sustaining us," Rich said.

Simon said local residents, mine owners and operators, and others opposed to the federal designation formed the Animas River Stakeholders Group in 1994 to retain local control over what water standards were implemented.



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At center, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Martin

times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28609880/navajo-nation-president-russell-begave-declare-state-emergency?source=pkg

- Gov. Martinez tours toxic plume in Animas River (http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28609119/gov-martinez-tours-toxic-plume-animas-river?source=pkg)
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 - Mine waste in Animas River reaches Farmington (http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28605985/mine-waste-animas-river-reaches-farmington?source=pkg)
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- Aug 6:
- Colorado mine spills pollution into Animas River (http://www.daily-times.com/farmington-news/ci_28596101/gold-king-mine-spills-pollution-into-animas-river?source=pkg)

Though the Superfund designation was avoided, the threat of litigation had an impact — Sunnyside Gold Corporation, a former mine operator, signed a consent decree in 1996 with

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Weston Solution Inc. assistant engineer associate Megan Oller on Monday measures water flowing out of Gold King Mine north of Silverton, Colo. (Jon Austria — The Daily Times)

Colorado to continue to operate a water treatment plant on Cement Creek and clean up several abandoned mines in the Upper Animas Mining District.

In exchange, Sunnyside Gold Corp. would be allowed to plug the Sunnyside Mine, located near Gold King Mine, and end its clean-up responsibility in the region.

Sunnyside Gold Corp. completed about 17 remediation projects in the Upper Animas Mining District by 1999, according to the stakeholders group's website.

The corporation installed concrete bulkheads in the Sunnyside Mine between 1996 and 2002, which closed the mine and stopped the discharge of hundreds of gallons of polluted water.

However, Todd Hennis, owner of the Gold King Mine and neighboring Mogul Mine, said Tuesday the plug didn't actually stop the water.

"The Sunnyside water is going by various paths, faults, fissures, etc. and coming out the neighboring mine properties," Hennis said.

Hennis said that Gold King Mine, until 2003, was discharging 7 gallons of polluted water per minute.

After 2003, Gold King Mine, Red & Bonita Mine and Mogul Mine began discharging hundreds of gallons per minute, according to EPA records.

After a lengthy court battle involving Hennis, Sunnyside Gold Corp. discharged its obligation to maintain the Cement Creek water treatment plant, which was shutdown.

With polluted waters pouring from several mines and no plant to treat it, the water in the upper Animas River began to degrade significantly.

"I have been begging Kinross (current owner of Sunnyside Gold Corp.) to step forward voluntarily and be proactive and address the issues," Hennis said.

"They were trying to get out of any potential liability at a very cheap price."

Kinross issued a statement Tuesday.

The company described last week's spill as a "very unfortunate incident," but denied any involvement.

"Sunnyside mine workings have no physical connection to the Gold King and such a connection never existed," according to the statement. "Sunnyside is not the cause of the water build up at Gold King."

Marcie Bidwell is executive director of the Mountain Studies Institute, a nonprofit environmental research organization that has been involved in monitoring river changes since last week's discharge.

She said Tuesday it was "very possible" that runoff from Sunnyside Mine escaped through fractures into nearby mines.

Since 2008, Simon said the EPA has talked about a "targeted" Superfund limited to the Upper Animas Mining District. Sunnyside Gold Corp., a member of Animas River Stakeholders Group, offered \$6.5 million to address water quality issues in the targeted area.

The catch, according to Simon, was the EPA had to release Sunnyside Mine Corp. from liability.

"The EPA has not really bought off on that," Simon said. "But the money is still there and the EPA recently requested they do some (remediation work) and pay for it from the \$6.5 million fund, which is supposed to have risen to \$10 million in that amount of time."

According to Simon, the EPA has not agreed to release Sunnyside from liability.

Hennis said \$10 million is not nearly enough to adequately remediate the mining district.

Simon said that since the Gold King Mine spill, he has reflected on his organization's previous opposition to the Superfund designation.

"We were dead set against Superfund at the time, but I would not say that is the case now," Simon said.

Martin Hestmark, assistant regional director for EPA's Region 8, said Monday that he is talking with stakeholders about solutions, which may include building a new water treatment plant.

He said he does not regret that his agency was not more aggressive in seeking a Superfund designation for the site.

"It's important that the affected communities be supportive," he said. "That is an evolving process."

Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper's spokeswoman, Kathy Green, said the decision is up to the community.

"At this point, (Hickenlooper) plans to continue to work with the EPA and the community on response and recovery for the area, and in addressing other mines in the state," Green said.

Larry and Cheryl Markwell own the Hungry Moose Bar and Grill in Silverton, which opened a year ago this month.

Both husband and wife described the Gold King Mine spill as a tragedy and said they were open to solutions.

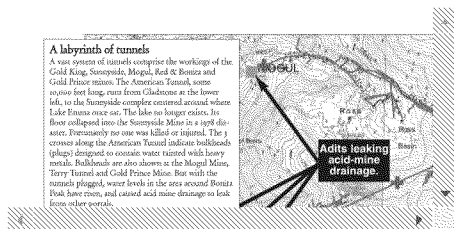
"We have people that fish, canoe and raft (in Silverton)," Larry Markwell said. "If people aren't in the water, they won't be coming to eat."

Cheryl Markwell said the town was plagued by problems, including a housing shortage and expensive utilities.

"This town is full of talk," Cheryl Markwell said. "It's a town that needs to act."

Steve Garrison covers crime and courts for The Daily Times. He can be reached at 505-564-4644 and stgarrison@daily-times.com (<mailto:stgarrison@daily-times.com>). Follow him on Twitter @SteveGarrisonDT (<http://www.twitter.com/SteveGarrisonDT>) on Twitter.

Map of mining tunnels north of Silverton
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Gold mine's toxic plume extends to Utah

Staff, The (Farmington, N.M.) Daily Times

4:59 p.m. EDT August 11, 2015

On the scene at the abandoned gold mine in Silverton, Colo., at the source of the spill that has turned the Animas River orange. Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY



(Photo: Jerry McBride, AP)

FARMINGTON, N.M. — The plume of heavy metals released last week into the Animas River (<http://bit.ly/1NIWjMh>) from the Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo., reached Utah on Monday.

As of Monday evening, officials said the plume of contamination was southeast of Montezuma Creek, Utah, and was headed for Lake Powell. Environmental Protection Agency officials say the pollutants in the plume include arsenic, lead, copper, aluminum and cadmium, but have not released any detailed information on the spill that started Wednesday morning and has since been contained.

The Gold King Mine's discharge raises the possibility of long-term damage from the toxic metals falling out of suspension as the plume slowly moves along the river.

"Sediment does settle," said Shaun McGrath, administrator of EPA's Region 8. "It settles down to the bottom of the riverbed."

EPA officials announced Monday afternoon that public access to the Animas and San Juan rivers would continue to be closed until at least Aug. 17.

One rural water user association in San Juan County, where New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez declared a state of emergency Monday, has spent thousands of dollars buying water from Farmington and Aztec because it had to shut down its wells after the toxic mine waste spilled into the Animas last week.

"We don't want to take a chance of contaminating them — and it sure has cost us a lot of money," said Rick Mitchell, Flora Vista Mutual Domestic Water Association general manager.

Mustard-colored water began rushing out of the Gold King Mine in southern Colorado on Wednesday after an EPA team disturbed a dam of loose rock lodged in the mine.

river	in time	in river	effects on Animas River to last two years

The deluge of polluted water poured into Cement Creek and continued into the Animas River. The plume of pollution, clearly visible from the air and estimated to be more than 80 miles long at one point, reached Farmington, N.M., on Saturday morning.

McGrath said future runoff from storms will kick that toxic sediment back into the water, which means there will need to be long-term monitoring.



USATODAY

EPA: Pollution from mine spill much worse than feared

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/09/navajo-nation-epa-spill/31384515/>

He added that "the Animas River has historically been polluted by acid mine drainage."

Chapters within the Northern Agency have started the process of issuing emergency declarations after toxic mine waste flowed down the San Juan River onto the Navajo Nation.

The San Juan River travels west through the Navajo Nation, then converges with the Colorado River at Lake Powell in southeastern Utah. For the chapter communities near the San Juan River, it is the main source of water for crops and livestock.

So far, the chapters of Upper Fruitland, Nenahnezad, San Juan and Shiprock have issued either declarations or resolutions calling for a state of emergency within their boundaries.

The "slug" of pollution, which the EPA says contains metals and is about as acidic as black coffee, is headed toward Lake Powell.

Silverton is surrounded by abandoned mines, and the EPA was checking on one of the worst ones, the Gold King, when the breach occurred. Area residents are furious that the federal agency charged with fighting pollution accidentally caused it.

The Animas has largely returned to running clear below Silverton and into Durango, although some of the orange sediment remains in some puddles and along the shore.



USATODAY

EPA pollutes Colo. river during mine cleanup

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/08/07/colorado-river-epa-mine-wastewater-spill/31320641/>

Officials advise residents with wells in the flood plains of the Animas River and the San Juan River downstream of the confluence of the two rivers to have their water tested before using it for cooking, drinking or bathing.

County Executive Officer Kim Carpenter voiced frustration about the delay in getting information about the chemicals in the water. The data, he said, will "give us a big picture of what we are going to deal with and the long-term effects we will have to deal with."

Contributing: Steve Garrison, Joshua Kellogg and Noel Lyn Smith, *The (Farmington, N.M.) Daily Times*; and Trevor Hughes, *USA TODAY*

WASTEWATER SPILL THREATENS WATERWAYS

The Environmental Protection Agency has taken responsibility for inadvertently causing a 3 million gallon spill of toxic orange waste-water while trying to clean up an abandoned gold mine in Colorado.

● Spread of leak



Alejandro Gonzalez, USA TODAY

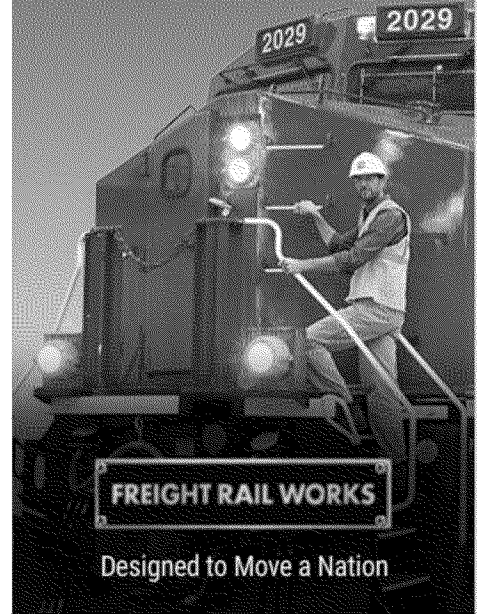


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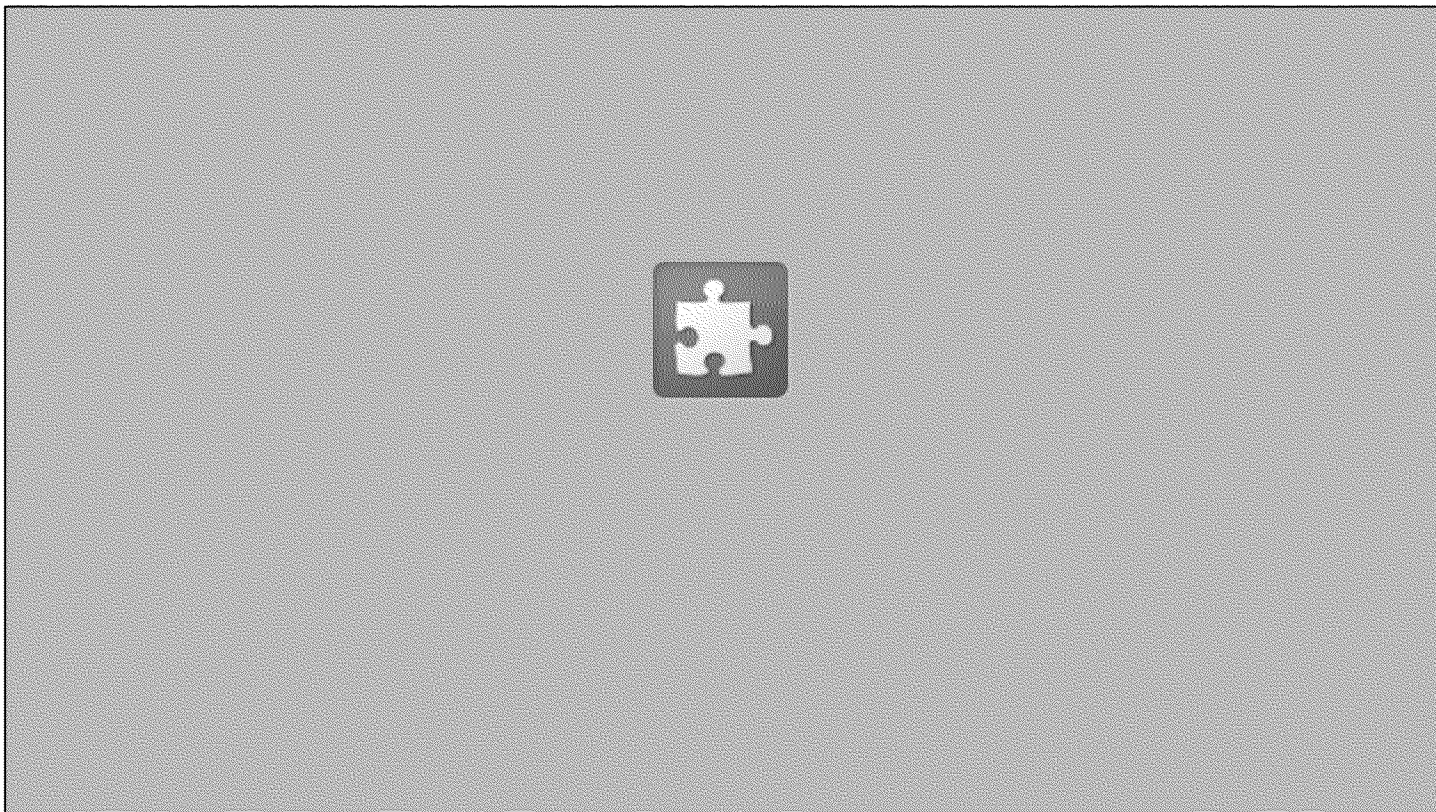


U.S. Edition

Colorado health official: No river health risk

By Dana Ford and Ed Payne, CNN

Updated 2:25 PM ET, Tue August 11, 2015



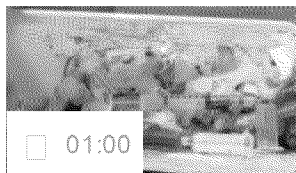
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Story highlights

The EPA accidentally released a plume of toxic metals into the Animas River

Among those most hurting from the spill are

(CNN)—From his backyard in Durango, Colorado, Tom Bartles can see the Animas River, which was stained an unnatural orange.

businesses that depend on the Animas day to day

It's still unclear what long-term impact will be on water, soil, animals, recreation

The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally released millions of gallons of pollutants into the water last week, turning the typically blue water to the color of mustard.

"Everybody in town knew it was coming. It was hard to wake up in the morning and see an orange river," Bartles told CNN. "Many of the locals in this region are probably going to experience a certain level of mourning."

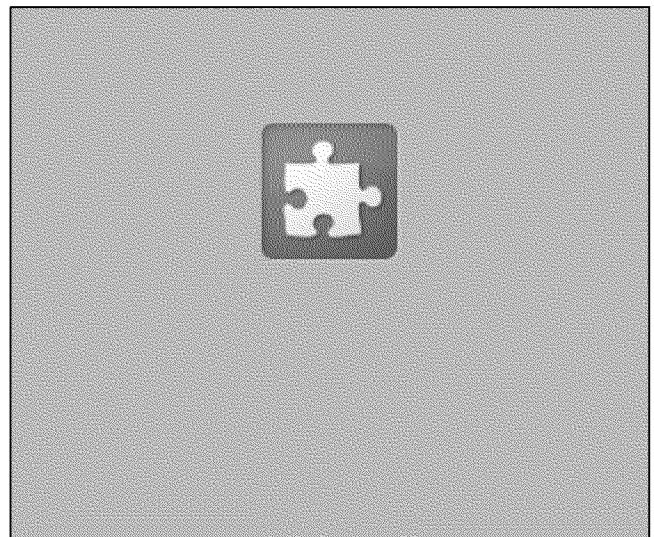
By Tuesday, the plume of heavy metals had largely moved on and the river looked clear. A tourist probably wouldn't notice anything was off, but a local would know it's not quite right, Bartles said.



Bartles took before and after photos of the Animas River from his backyard.

And for him, the biggest concern wasn't the immediate threat anyway; it's the spill's potential long-term and cumulative impact.

"This is a major, major problem," said Jonathan Freedman, a toxicologist at the University of Louisville.



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Typically it takes years or even decades for health problems from metals to develop.

However, preliminary tests show that the Animas River in Durango "doesn't appear" to

present a health risk, Colorado's top health official said Tuesday. Following a spill of mine wastewater into the river, the metal levels along the river in the Durango area have returned to pre-incident levels, Dr. Larry Wolk said.

The river remains closed, but could reopen soon.

Animas River toxic spill: 'This is a real mess'

'We all share this crisis'

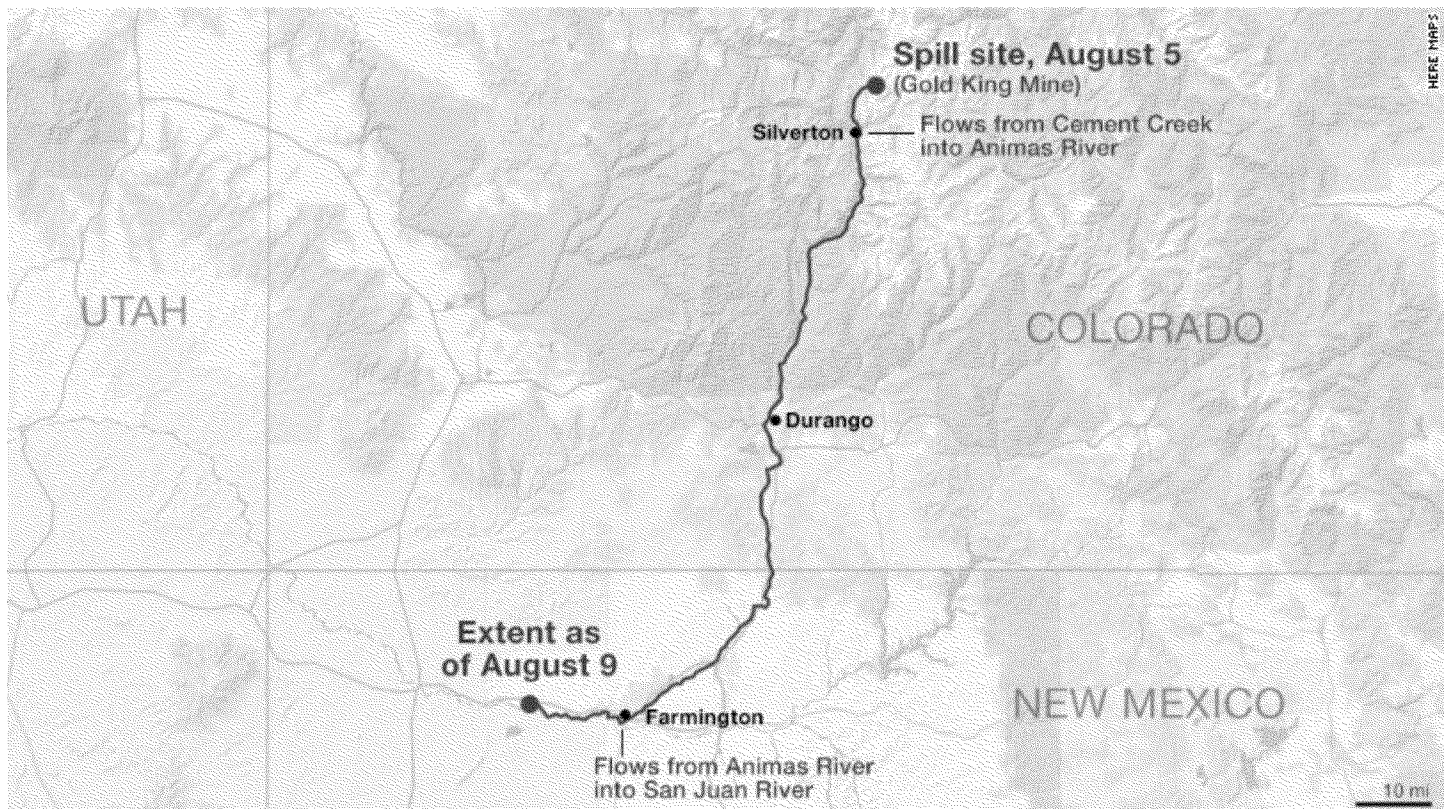
Officials said they believe the spill carried metals like iron, zinc and copper into a creek that feeds into the Animas.

It caused a spike in concentrations of total and dissolved metals in the water, the EPA said. It's unclear exactly what effect that will have.

"It's all questions at this point and very few answers," said Bartles, who described the Animas as the "heartbeat of the community."

A lot of people depend on the river for water, recreation, fishing and farming -- not just in Durango, but up and down the waterway.

"We all share this crisis no matter where we live," said Bartles. "And we all have to take responsibility."



The spill into the Animas River in Colorado now extends into New Mexico.

Moving downstream

In neighboring New Mexico, the heartbreak of the spill was just as real as the toxic mix moved on.

"We came out here together, and we looked at the river and we cried," Rosemary Hart told CNN affiliate KRQE.

She lives on the Animas and her family depends on a well to get water. The spill has made the water unusable, she said.

"My first concern is the next generations, and what they're walking into," Hart told KRQE.

The U.S. Geological Survey reported the size of the spill to be more than 3 million

gallons, compared with the initial EPA estimate of 1 million gallons.

Gov. Susana Martinez has declared a state of emergency.



11 photos: EPA spill turns Colorado river orange

According to the EPA, the spill occurred when one of its teams was using heavy equipment to enter the Gold King Mine, a suspended mine north of Durango. Instead of entering the mine and beginning the process of pumping and treating the contaminated water inside as planned, the team accidentally caused it to flow into the nearby Animas.

Getting answers from the EPA is critical, according to Doris Stock, who lives along the river.

"We could lose our animals. It could damage our crops. It'll destroy the soil," she told KRQE.

Few answers

Residents are looking for answers, but the EPA has few to offer at this point.

More than 300 people attended an informational meeting at the Farmington, New Mexico, Civic Center on Monday night.

"Over the next few days, the waters in the river are going to clear up," said Jeff Witte, New Mexico's agriculture secretary. "That's doesn't mean they're safe folks."

Mark Hayes of the EPA reminded residents not to use the water until they get an all clear. When that will be, officials don't know.

The dangers

According to the EPA, last Wednesday's spill caused a spike in metal concentrations, but levels "began to return to pre-event conditions" by Thursday.

However, according to the EPA's own data, there were still very high levels of metals on Thursday. An arsenic sample tested 26 times higher than the EPA acceptable level.

Lead was even worse -- much worse.

"Oh my God! Look at the lead!" said Joseph Landolph, a toxicologist at the University of Southern California, pointing to a lead level in the Animas River nearly 12,000 times higher than the acceptable level set by the EPA.

And one thing is for sure: these metals don't disappear. Even if they go down to low levels in the water, they will likely be in the sediment and could be kicked up into the water at any time.

"This was such a horrible accident," Landolph said. "I served on the EPA scientific advisory board, and I have the utmost respect for the agency. I wish them Godspeed in cleaning it up and containing it."

'We'll weather it'

Among those most hurting from the spill are businesses that depend on the Animas day to day.

Andy Corra is an owner of the Durango-based 4Corners Riversports, which has a sister company called 4Corners Whitewater.

"The river is basically closed so that shuts down all the rafting," he said. "They're losing

all their revenue."

On good days, he said, that could be as much as \$10,000 a day.

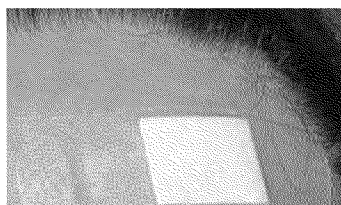
"One day business is booming, and the next day, boom, it's shut off," said Corra. "It's a huge bummer for the whole industry."

He's been in Durango for 35 years and loves it. He called the city a paradise and, without exaggeration, the greatest place in the world.

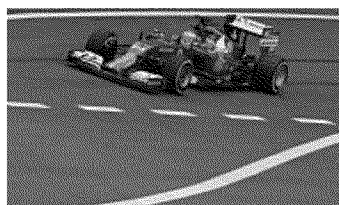
"We'll weather it. There's a bigger concern for the river, but the river will weather it as well," said Corra.

CNN's Mariano Castillo and Eli Watkins contributed to this report.

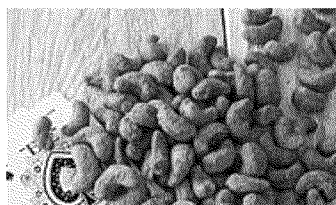
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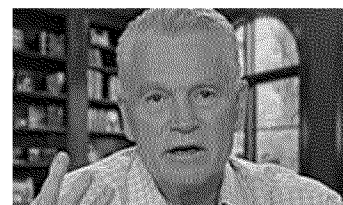
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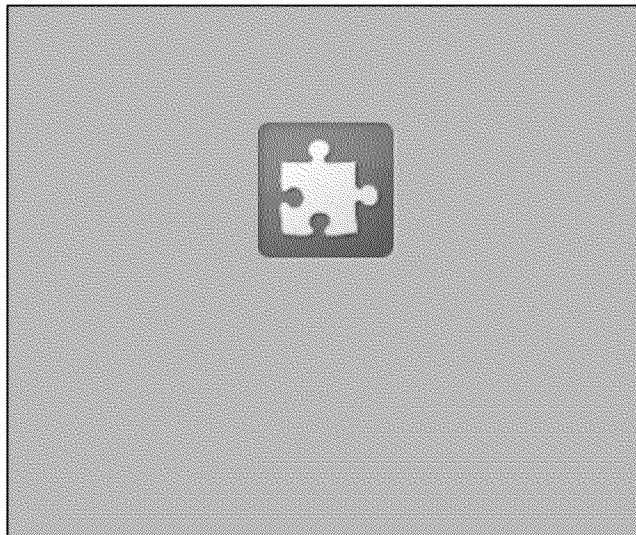
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